

A
S E R M O N

PREACHED at the

Parish Church of St. James, Westminster,

On Tuesday, April the 28th, 1761,

BEFORE THE

G O V E R N O R S

OF THE

MIDDLESEX-HOSPITAL,

FOR

Sick, and Lame, and for Lying-in Married Women.

By CHARLES DODGSON, M. A. Rector of Kirby Wiske,
and Chaplain to the Earl of NORTHUMBERLAND.

Published at the Request of the SOCIETY.

L O N D O N :

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April 28, 1761.

O R D E R E D,

That the Thanks of this Society be given to the Rev.
Mr. DODGSON for his Sermon preached before
Us this Day; and that he be desired to print the
same.

NORTHUMBERLAND, President.



To the RIGHT HONOURABLE
HUGH, Earl of NORTHUMBERLAND, President,

The Right Hon. Earl GOWER,	} Vice-Presidents,
The Right Hon. Lord GROSVENOR,	
The Right Hon. Lord SCARSDALE,	
Sir WILLIAM BEAUCHAMP PROCTOR, Bart.	
Sir KENRICK CLAYTON, Bart.	
The Hon. General CORNWALLIS,	

And the Rest of the GOVERNORS and CONTRIBUTORS

TO THE
MIDDLESEX-HOSPITAL,
This S E R M O N

Preached and published at their Request,

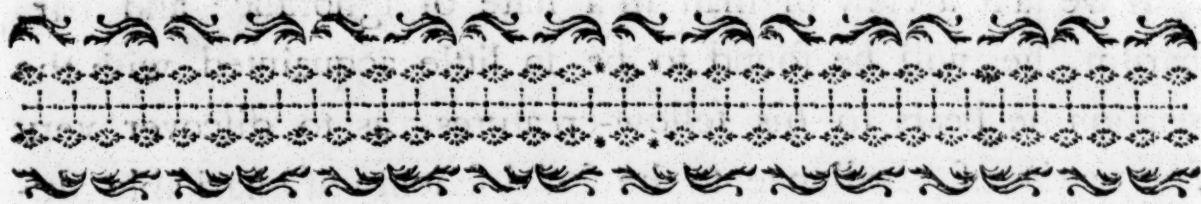
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Their obedient

Humble Servant,

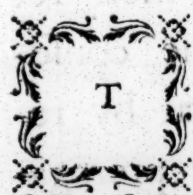
CHARLES DODGSON.

CHARLES DOUGLASS



Proverbs iii. 27.

*With-hold not Good from Them, to whom it is due,
when it is in the power of thine hand to do it.*

 O plead the cause of human nature in distress, is an undertaking, so perfectly agreeable to the charitable dispositions of the present age, that the suit seems to be granted, even before the case is opened; for that virtue, which *cannot withhold good from those, to whom it is due*, has produced its salutary effects in almost every part of the kingdom. Hospitals have been built, and are generously supported, for the prevention and relief of all the most affecting instances of misery and distress. However as the reward, consequential to this humane behaviour, in some degree consists of the pleasure, which arises from a consciousness of its excellence, it will not be impertinent to consider, how exactly it agrees with the manners of a civilized nation, the rules of private interest, and public justice, and *brings forth fruits worthy* of the Christian religion.

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If we take a view of man in a state of ignorance and barbarism, he will be found to be so little acquainted with the relation he bears to his fellow-creatures, as to discover very few marks of obedience to the social scheme of charitable duties; for he satisfies his wants by such acts of violence, as give a fierceness to his manners, and almost reduce him to a level with the beasts of the field. But, in the progress of society, his sentiments become more delicate. From his own feelings, he learns to sympathize with his fellow-creatures, and reflecting upon the advantages, which may arise from mutual assistance, he at last becomes interested in their relief and preservation. Pity, which was at first the consequence of reason and reflection, is rendered habitual by repetition and example, and by degrees assumes the prerogative of an independent principle. When the manners are perfectly refined by the improvements of reason, this compassionate sensibility generally exerts its power in proportion to the wretchedness of the object which affects it, and almost forces the hand *not to withhold good* from those, to whom it appears to be eminently due. Now of all the instances of distress, perhaps none is more affecting, than the disorders of the body, embittered by the miseries of poverty; for they present us with such a frightful picture of human woe, that the very sight of it is sufficient to awaken every thing, which is tender and benevolent in the breast of man.

At that melancholy spectacle may be seen disease in all its various and dismal forms; languishing upon the bed of sickness,

ness, and imploring help with all the moving eloquence of grief, the shrieks of pain, the sighs of death, and ravings of despair. The wretched sufferers cannot help themselves.— They are probably deprived of the use of those limbs, on which depended the very supports of life.---They cannot by their own means procure the least alleviation of pain and sickness; for their poverty not only oppresses them with a load of misery, peculiar to itself; but, by its aggravating circumstances, adds to the weight of their other misfortunes. Misfortunes! which probably overtook them in a faithful discharge of their duties, in earning the wages of industry by the sweat of their brows, and supplying the wants of a large and helpless family. Here the distress is multiplied to such a degree, as is not easily conceived by any, who have not experienced these excesses of domestic misery, grief without any prospect of consolation, and famine without the natural powers of obtaining relief. Who are these poor, unhappy wretches? Are they *sinners above the rest of the Galileans*? Charity, forbid the insinuation. Neither can it be supposed, that the inferiority of their station places them beneath the notice of their superiors; for they are formed of the same materials with their fellow-creatures, and, tho' now afflicted with pain, are as capable of the same refinements of pleasure-----They were made by the same God----redeemed by the same Saviour---and are entitled to the same hopes of glory---Is it possible to suffer such creatures as these to faint under a load of, perhaps unmerited, misfortunes; and, for want of a little assistance, to become useless to themselves, their friends, and their country?

No.

No. Every person is interested in their preservation for several reasons, which shall be explained in their natural order. In the first place, no man can *with-hold good from them* in this their great distress without establishing a very severe law against himself. We are all equally exposed to the vicissitudes of fortune, and subject to the same infirmities of nature. 'Tis therefore an act of prudence, enforced by considerations of private interest, to give such assistance to others, as might be reasonably expected from them, if circumstances were mutually exchanged. And God only knows how soon that may really be the case; for *man never long continueth in one stay. Even riches suddenly make themselves wings, and fly away like an eagle towards heaven.* Such as are the poor at present, such were a few years ago the ancestors of the most wealthy families; and such in all probability will be many of their descendants. However the best way of giving stability to those possessions, which are of a fugitive nature, is to deserve them by acts of charity. Even in case of a disappointment, the inconveniencies, arising from a change of circumstances, will be greatly diminished; if every person endeavours to strengthen, by his own example, that bond of union, which procures a return of good offices, and establishes a common interest amongst the several members of the same society. *He that doth good turns, is mindful of what may come hereafter, and when he falleth, he shall find a stay.*

But it will also appear, that the public derives many advantages from this behaviour. *We are all members of the same body,*

body, and, as the Apostle expresses it, *if one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or, if one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it*; for, as in the body natural, no limb can be tortured with pain, or disqualified for a proper discharge of its duty, without affecting the whole frame; so, in the body politic, the misery of any one individual in some measure distresses the public. They therefore, who contribute to the relief of an unfortunate fellow-citizen, promote the welfare of the state, as much as a physician secures the health of the body, when he removes a disorder, detrimental to the constitution, and restores strength and vigour to a disabled limb.

It has pleased the Lord of the universe to introduce such a constitution of things, as forms a regular scale of subordination; and connects mankind by a chain of mutual dependency and convenience. Every class, which is subservient to the production of happiness, is an equally necessary part of the social plan, and equally entitled to our care and protection. This system of government may be compared to a very complicated machine; the several parts of which have such an intimate connection with one another, that a defect in any even the least wheel will cause an irregularity of motion, and prevent some advantages, which would otherwise be produced by the ingenuity of the contrivance. Now if this piece of mechanism could be supposed to be constructed in such a manner as to adjust, regulate, and correct the irregularities, arising from accidental obstructions; it would then be more similar

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to the model of a perfect society; where every member has a duty to perform peculiar to his own situation; on a proper discharge of which depends not only private happiness, but also the public welfare; where if any one becomes unable to perform these duties, charity hastens to his assistance; and endeavours to remedy the disorders, which arise from the distress of individuals, and, in some degree, affect the whole community.

The part, which the lower class of the people act upon the stage of life, is not indeed of that splendid nature, which attracts the attention of the gay and thoughtless spectator; but the statesman can draw aside the veil of obscurity, which conceals them from the eyes of pride and folly, and estimate the importance of the character from its public utility. Riches and poverty are only accidental distinctions, and seldom make any difference in personal merit; for that entirely depends upon the manner, in which a person discharges the duties of his station. 'Tis true, the poor are compelled to submit to the drudgery of the meaner employments, but that is oftener an hereditary misfortune, than the consequence of their own behaviour. However, by these means, the rich are supplied with such things, as could not otherwise be procured; unless they themselves underwent the hardships and fatigue of bodily labour. Now as this unequal division of the goods of fortune throws almost all the slavish business of the state upon the poor; it is not difficult to determine what degree of protection is due to those useful servants of the public.

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They are, as it were, the hands and feet of the body politic. Without their assistance, none of the advantages, derived from agriculture, and the improvements of art, could be obtained even by the mediation of riches. The great would lose the preheminance of their rank, and become slaves to their own necessities. Royalty itself would be stripped of its diadem, and compelled to submit itself to as galling a yoke of vassalage, as poverty ever yet imposed upon the meanest beggar of the state.

Such therefore is the connection between the different ranks of men, united together by a community of natural and civil interests, that the higher classes cannot be indifferent to the happiness of the lower, without acting injuriously both to themselves and their country. Political motives therefore ought to prevail upon every prudent member of society *to be feet to the lame, and a staff of comfort to those, that are in distress; to ease the unmerited burdens of those poor creatures, from whose labours the public derives most of its conveniences, strength, and grandeur. We eat of the labour of their hands; for they exercise their weary limbs from the rising up of the sun until the going down of the same; and are content to drink of the brook in the way. Hence our garners are full of all manner of store, and the earth yields its fruits of increase.* What reward therefore shall be bestowed upon these instruments, which God is pleased to make use of in conveying so many of his blessings to mankind? They don't desire *to be clothed in purple, and fine linnen, and to fare sumptuously every day.* They

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are content with sackcloth, and *the crumbs which fall from the rich man's table*. When they are blessed with health, they are willing to struggle with poverty, to live in obscurity, and to submit to servitude. But when they are visited with sickness, and incapable of earning the necessities of life; when *the very dogs come, and lick their sores*, they then indeed implore the assistance of their richer brethren----beg a small pittance out of the superfluities of wealth; a mite from that treasure, which lies rusting in the chest, but may be generously employed in restoring them to health, to labour, and the duties of their station. If the Jews *did not muzzle the ox, that trod out the corn*, will not a Christian permit his fellow-creature *to glean even amongst the sheaves* of his own reaping, and *rebuke him not*?

That unequal distribution of things, which cannot be avoided in the fluctuating state of temporal possessions, supplies the means of curing the disorder it seems to introduce. For, as the Apostle expresses it, *the abundance of the one may supply the wants of the other*. Indeed the remedy is more than sufficient for the disease; for the number of those who are really distressed, bears an infinitely small proportion to such as have something to spare. This wise constitution of things brings to light many virtues, which would otherwise be concealed, and strengthens the union of society by the coalition of generosity and gratitude; for *they meet, as it were, and kiss each other, proclaiming glory to God on high by establishing peace and good will among men below*.

This

This is the behaviour, that becomes the disciples of Jesus Christ ; *by this shall all men know ye are my disciples, if ye love, and consequently protect, one another.* This is the most genuine test of our allegiance to the King of kings. *Whoso possesseth this world's goods, and shutteth up his bowels of mercy, when he seeth his brother in need, how dwelleth the love of God in him?* The question is indeed too difficult to be answered in favour of those, who profess a regard for their Maker, and neglect the happiness of that creature, which he has recommended to their protection by the most interesting motives ; by repeated promises of the most alluring rewards. Though the odious crime, of which an uncharitable man is guilty, can find no advocates in this place ; yet as beauty seems to display additional charms by being contrasted with deformity, let us now take a view of the enormity of his guilt, who, in opposition to the divine law, refuses *to open his hands wide to the poor and needy.* In order to see it in the most easy manner, let us suppose, that a sovereign prince heaps all possible favours upon one of his subjects, and, amongst the rest, gives him a very large pension ; desiring him to save a certain part of it for the relief of his distressed neighbours—Ought not gratitude to incline him to obey the request of his benefactor ? But suppose, his obedience is also made a test of his loyalty----will he become a traitor, and rebel against the king, who supports him ? Suppose farther, that this treason may be legally punished by a confiscation of all his possessions ; that it disqualifies him for receiving any future favours, and exposes him to the most dreadful punishments—will any man
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in his senses reduce himself to this deplorable situation? or can he reasonably expect a reprieve? On the other hand----suppose, the performance of the condition, an act of tendernefs, entitles him to the greatest honours, which a subject can desire, or a prince bestow----what name shall be given to him, if to ingratitude he adds cruelty; to cruelty treason; and chuses to deserve the most terrible punishments, when by doing an act of charity he might claim the greatest rewards? But is not this reasoning applicable to the cause, depending between every uncharitable man, and the King of kings? Before a Christian assembly it is needless to proceed to the proof, for of all the duties, which are enforced by the awful commands of God, none of the social kind holds a more distinguished rank than that which is calculated for the relief of the poor.

And indeed if there was no other proof of the divine goodness to mankind, but the frequent injunctions of this humane behaviour, should we not have sufficient reason to cry out, *Lord, what is man, that thou art thus mindful of him?* but indeed almost every attribute of the Deity, as far as is consistent with human liberty, and a state of probation, is exerted to promote the happiness of mankind. And, *if we would be merciful, even as our father in heaven is merciful*, we must support the plan of his providence (the executive part of which in many instances is committed to our care) and secure our own happiness by encreasing that of our fellow-creatures.

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Let us now consider, how far the discharge of the duties of humanity has a natural tendency to secure that desirable end. We have already taken a survey of the objects recommended to protection, and pitied their distress. But, when they are properly relieved, the blessing of God attends the charitable attempt----*The tears of the afflicted are wiped away.* The weak become strong. The lame dance. *The sick take up their bed, and walk.* The happiness they feel, communicates itself to their friends and acquaintance, and one man's safety becomes the joy of thousands. The good effects of this happy change are not confined within the limits of family connections. They are diffused all around, and private happiness is enlarged into the public good; for to restore even one citizen to the state, is, to encrease the number of those, who may be useful to the public. How serviceable to his country one man may be, no man can tell----*The liberty of Rome was saved by a slave.*

Let us now turn our eyes to the generous and humane promoters of these scenes of private joy and public welfare. As they *wept with those that wept, they now rejoice with those that rejoice.* As the friends of mankind, they are entitled to their friendship. As the fathers of the poor and afflicted, they hope for their blessing. *Yea, blessed is he, that considereth the poor. The Lord shall deliver him in time of trouble. The Lord shall strengthen him upon the bed of languishing; and make all his bed in his sickness.*

Nothing

Nothing now remains but to describe the most effectual means of relieving the poor, when they are visited with sickness, and afflicted with pain; for there is a merit even in the manner of discharging our duties, and the most meritorious is that, which in all human probability will be most successful. In the cases under consideration, private charity, distributed in a promiscuous manner, is not the most probable method of redressing the evil, to which it is applied; for, like a single ray of the sun, it is generally too weak to produce a very sensible effect: but when the alms of many, like the collected beams of light, act with an united force, they restore life, and health, and vigour.

Hence arises the necessity and excellence of charitable societies; which amass, as it were, the scattered emanations of bounty, and prevent the fatal consequences of neglect and ignorance either in the patients themselves, or in those that attend them. For it must be remembered, poor people are in general not very good judges of what is proper for the treatment of their several diseases, and are often surrounded with persons as ignorant as themselves. By these means, that charity, which was intended to satisfy hunger, soothe pain, and save life, supplies the means of defeating its own generous purposes, and becomes the innocent cause of greater misery, and a more certain death.

'Tis necessary therefore, they should be assisted with the advice of such as excel in the knowledge of their various dif-

disorders, and removed into safe and commodious apartments; for such are the uncomfortable dwellings of poverty, that they either do not defend the wretched inhabitants against the rudeness of the weather, or supply them with such air as is often of a poisonous and pestilential nature.

Now that relief, which is so necessary to the removal of their dangerous complaints, is effectually supplied by the bounty of charitable societies, and by that in particular, which gives occasion to the present meeting. A society, which animated by a sense of the duty they owe to themselves, their country, and their God, began some years ago to procure all the necessary helps for some of the most affecting instances of human distress. And they now invite the generous and humane to join with them in carrying on this *work of compassion*; in extending, as it were, *the healing wings of mercy* over their own neighbourhood, the populous county of Middlesex-----to do all, that liberality can do, for the sick and lame; and, what is an essential branch of this charity, to procure the best assistance for the wives of the poor at that critical season, when nature has imposed a most painful task upon the mothers of mankind. Any person in that situation is undoubtedly an object of great compassion; but the hand of succour ought to be preferably stretched out to those, who have had virtue to resist the allurements of vice, and obeyed the laws of affection, without violating those of their maker----Their yoke ought to be made as light as possible.

The most civilized nations of antiquity, convinced of the great advantages arising to a state from a legal increase of inhabitants, had recourse to several expedients to encourage those sorts of compacts, which strengthen the hands of the public by adding to the number of citizens. And with submission be it spoken, the present state of this kingdom requires all the attention of the legislature to pursue some such like methods. In the mean time, the end will be greatly promoted by this species of well-judged charity; for does it not encourage the poor to enter into the married state, when they consider that the person, on whose safety their own happiness so greatly depends, will be assisted in the most effectual manner at the public expence, when the pains of death would otherwise surround her?

Not to assist a person, whose life is in danger, when it is in our power to do it, is in some degree to be guilty of murder. By a law amongst the Egyptians, this behaviour was punished with death. But in the case under consideration, the crime would be doubly great, as it probably ends in the death of two, the mother and the child. Nay, may it not be consider'd as a murder committed upon posterity, as it cuts short the line of all possible descendents from that stock, and has a tendency to make the earth a frightful desert?

To be instrumental to the preservation of any one person is in many cases of the utmost consequence to succeeding generations, and contributes towards giving a sort of “ artificial im-
“ mortality

“ mortality to the human species.” With what pleasure therefore must the promoters of this charity reflect upon the probable effects of their bounty, when they consider how many thousand poor objects have been relieved? and see, as it were, passing in review before them an endless succession of generations, which owe their being to ancestors preserved by means of their liberality? All the possible numbers, which may descend from parents thus charitably rescued out of the jaws of death, will almost exceed the powers of calculation.

’Tis to be hoped, that no person will think he sufficiently discharges his duty to the poor, by paying such assessments as the law directs. The nature of that relief depends too much upon uncertainties, which ’tis as needless, as it would be invidious, to describe. But even supposing all the poor-laws were faithfully carried into execution, a great deal must even then be done by charity; for the relief they afford is unavoidably liable to great abuse in the application, and is seldom sufficient to procure all the necessary helps for the removal of a dangerous complaint. Now charity supplies what is wanting for the better relief of particular grievances; and hospitals grant that assistance, which is required by the laws of nature, society, and heaven.

As this charitable undertaking has such a manifest tendency not only to relieve the misery, but also to save the lives of the poor; to prevent a premature diminution of the numbers of mankind in the present, and to encrease them in succeeding generations; to promote private happiness and the public welfare; to execute that part of God’s government, which is so peculiarly

culiarly enjoined by his holy word; it merits all the encouragement, which can be given by the man, the citizen, and the christian; for it affords an effectual method of gratifying the tenderness of a compassionate temper; of discharging the fundamental laws of society; and of performing the characteristic duty of that holy religion, which he professes.

Let every one therefore give according to his abilities; remembering that he *who soweth plenteously, shall reap plenteously*. The many advantages, which are the natural consequences of charity even in this life, are sufficiently interesting to gain the attention, and influence the practice, of every considerate and well-disposed person. With regard to its rewards in that life, which is to succeed, hear the words of your saviour and your judge----*Come, ye blessed children of my father, enter into the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat----I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink.----I was sick, and ye visited me. Verily, verily I say unto you, in as much as ye did it to the least of these, ye did it unto me.* Thus by relieving the poor, you save yourselves.

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